The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Undergraduate Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee

**Minutes**

Thursday, January 25, 2018

Attending: Helena Dettmer (Chair); Steve Duck; Andrew Forbes; Kathryn Hall (staff); Meena Khandelwal; Cornelia Lang; Jerald Moon; Mary Noonan; Ana Rodríguez-Rodríguez

Absent: Tristan Schmidt; Rachel Williams

1. The minutes from November 30 were approved as written.
2. David Bennett, Professor and Chair, Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences, presented a proposal for a major in Sustainability (BS). David Bennett noted that the proposal was still under development and that his visit to UEPCC was mainly to hear the committee’s suggestions on the direction the proposal might take. He also noted that the idea for the new major had been under consideration for a number of years but only recently became a possibility because of several new hires in essential content areas. The major examines the intersection of the natural and human systems, where many of the largest challenges of the 21st century reside since sustainable outcomes are produced by system interaction. Students are very interested in this topic, with around 200 students in the Sustainability Certificate, which has grown rapidly.

The committee expressed concern that the proposed major might overlap and compete with some existing CLAS programs, such as the Environmental Science major or particular tracks in the Environmental Policy and Planning major. The committee discussed that overlapping programs could confuse students and advisors, with students not knowing which program might be the best fit for their interests. UEPCC suggested mapping out the existing programs while defining their learning and career objectives. This, in turn, could show how the programs complement each other. This rich constellation of programs, once defined, could be used to attract students to UI, helping all of the programs. UEPCC also discussed the importance of internships and applied activities that could perhaps be shared. UEPCC then suggested looking at sustainability majors and programs nationally to see any trends among other universities and how this variety of perspectives on the topic of sustainability and environmental sciences is handled. David Bennett added that some schools do have more than one program, such as in sustainability and environmental science, or with multiple related tracks within various majors since these programs can focus on very different perspectives of current challenges, such as climate change or water quality, studying these natural systems rather focusing than on the human interaction with that natural system.

UEPCC recommended looking for additional courses that could be added to the major, such as those in the humanities, the social sciences, and from Study Abroad. Likewise, writing and communication courses could benefit students since sustainability issues are now crucial to public debate about policy. UEPCC stressed that it was important for faculty in cluster hires, such as the water sustainability cluster, to be encouraged to teach undergraduate courses. At the end of the discussion, David Bennett thanked the committee for their suggestions, and UEPCC members encouraged his further work on the major. The proposal will return to UEPCC in the future.

1. David Bennett, Professor and Chair, Department of Geographical and Sustainability Sciences, presented a proposal for a combined undergraduate to graduate program for related tracks in the Geography major BA/BS (the Geographic Information Science track; the Environmental Studies track; and the Health and Society track) with the Geoinformatics subprogram in the Informatics MS. This U2G 3+2 program will create a clear pathway for students interested in geoinformatics, a growing field with a high demand for the skills and knowledge gained through the completion of the MS. UEPCC members endorsed the proposal and recommended its approval to the College. It will next move to the CLAS Graduate Educational Policy Committee and then to the Graduate Council in the Graduate College.
2. UEPCC members discussed possible agenda items for the spring semester. A key concern is the ACE evaluations. Current technical difficulties must be solved but the underlying purpose of evaluations and whether or not they are fulfilling their intended purpose should also be discussed. It might be time to try something radically new, with the evaluation concept rethought in order to prevent bias and to inspire useful suggestions and genuine insight into what students are learning or not learning, for example. These topics will be added to future agendas with related guest speakers invited to UEPCC.
3. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Forbes   
Associate Professor, Department of Biology  
Secretary for UEPCC